Strategy Research Project

A RISK-BASED APPROACH TO STRATEGIC BALANCE

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

A RISK-BASED APPROACH TO STRATEGIC BALANCE

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Current Secretary of Defense guidance to the armed services is to develop a strategically balanced Joint force capable of spanning the full spectrum of conflict. This concept is driven by acknowledgement that predicting every threat is unrealistic and promotes the idea that the best security approach is a flexible force capable of responding to a broad range of threats. The Army's Capstone Concept to support the Joint intent is development of a force that is not optimized towards specific threats but depends on rapid adaptability to threats as they are revealed. As envisioned, the Army's concept demands debate on the risk and affordability implications of this approach to strategic balance. This paper addresses a risk-based approach to balance the Army that assesses alternative postures and addresses the viability of balanced force concepts in mitigating national risk in a resource constrained environment. This assessment also examines alternate definitions and definitional implications of balance and the continued relevance of conventional capabilities and nuclear deterrence to a balanced force posture.

A RISK-BASED APPROACH TO STRATEGIC BALANCE

The current Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (CCJO) assessment is that the U.S. is in an era of persistent conflict characterized by uncertainty, volatility, and a complex range of threats spanning the spectrum of conflict.[1] The CCJO also indicates that the nature of conflict for the foreseeable future will be a mix of complex irregular, hybrid, and unconventional capabilities employed simultaneously along the full spectrum of conflict. In response, Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Robert Gates directed development of a full spectrum, strategically balanced force that possesses a robust irregular warfare capability on par with U.S. conventional and nuclear capabilities.[2] Strategic balance is described in the CCJO as a flexible force structure that depends on rapid adaptability to threats.[3] This concept acknowledges a complex threat environment where predicting and preparing for every threat is unrealistic.[4] The concept also states that continued dominance of U.S. conventional capabilities serve to make the probability of major combat operations (MCO) very low and both U.S. conventional and nuclear capabilities remain strong deterrents to threats who might consider conventional or nuclear options.[5]

The SECDEF's guidance and the CCJO concept have the Department of Defense (DoD) pursuing a strategic direction that may be based on assumptions that fail to realistically consider: (1) the current viability of U.S conventional and nuclear capabilities, (2) the affordability of the required force posture to support the concept, and (3) relevant risk to national security of the envisioned posture. The CCJO concept envisions a capability to conduct a wide range and proposes to expand U.S. capabilities in an era where the DoD should realistically expect reduced budgets.[6] The concept

also indicates a broad but unstated assumption that U.S. foreign policy will remain constant. This assumption may not be valid as economic and domestic realities may dictate a more conservative foreign policy. Also, U.S. conventional and nuclear capabilities may not currently be the effective strategic deterrents they once were.[7] U.S. conventional capability has atrophied as the result of nearly nine years of focus on unconventional warfare. Similarly, the U.S. nuclear capability is a rapidly aging Cold War era arsenal that requires modernization.

These are critically important assumptions that if wrong, undermine the viability of future strategy. Equally essential to the viability of security strategy is definition of an operating concept that can be readily articulated to address compelling threats, particularly with Congress to defend budgetary requests. Both the CCJO and ACC fall short in this regard. These two documents collectively forward an operating concept not focused on any specific threat, nor optimized for any specific mission that depends on rapid adaptability to defend against a broad range of threats. This is not only problematic for determining service equipping, manning or training priorities, it is also problematic in defending budgets to counter undefined, ambiguous, and complex threats. Future security strategy and associated operating concepts must fully consider compelling economic realities and the adverse impact that extended conflict has had on U.S. readiness. Finally, future security strategy must accommodate steadily eroding national capacity and resolve to support current foreign policy.

Matching Forces to Threats: The Complexity of Risk Management

An extended recession and a rapidly growing national debt that currently exceeds $12 trillion are clear indicators the nation's capacity to support foreign policy and conflict has limits. The nation's precarious economic disposition is a compelling

indicator that the nation can no longer afford to enter into or sustain conflicts like those in which we are currently engaged[8]. Through this economic lens, U.S. strategic direction fails to fully consider national values, resource capacity to support the strategy, and risk in consideration of a viable force posture. The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) guidance chooses to emphasize current conflicts which equates to a conscious acceptance of risk in the future.[9] The QDR and the CCJO appear to remain captive of the 2006 National Security Strategy (NSS) that serves to "shape the world, not merely be shaped by it."[10] The nature of this policy serves to obscure clarity of national values necessary in shaping security strategy. Viable security strategy must adequately consider national values and will to support it. Measures of national will, recent domestic polls indicate support for continued presence in Afghanistan and Iraq has steadily eroded. A December 2009 CNN/Gallup poll reflects that domestic support for continued engagement in Afghanistan continues a steady downward trend to a new low of only 43% supporting continued presence there with 55% opposed.[11] This is down from a January 2002 CBS poll reflecting public approval of the war at 87%.[12] The December 2009 CNN/Gallup poll also reflects 62% of those polled opposed continued involvement in Iraq.[13]

Adoption of a more conservative foreign policy would ideally translate into reduced likelihood of U.S. commitment of military force to support stabilization and nation-building missions. The DoD could then refocus force posture debate on the most compelling threats to national interests rather than the most likely types of conflict predicted in the QDR and CCJO.[14] So long as U.S. security policy remains unchanged,

the military is forced to span the spectrum of conflict in a manner that may not be affordable in the long-term and serves to dilute U.S. strengths.[15]

A more conservative security strategy does not diminish U.S. leadership or presume to eliminate engagement and promotion of democratic values. A more conservative policy prudently assumes less risk of entering into expensive stabilization and nation-building endeavors while the U.S. addresses compelling domestic and economic challenges. A more conservative policy might also serve to satisfy international expectations of the new administration for more inclusive partnering and reduce perception of the U.S. over the past decade as hegemonic, arrogant and reckless.[16]

Regardless of current policy, recent conflicts serve to influence collective military professional judgment on development of a force posture to meet future U.S. security challenges. Arguably, current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq do not represent threats to vital U.S. interests. A vital interest in this context is as defined by noted Foreign Policy expert Donald Nuechterlein, "...where probable serious harm to the security and well-being of the nation will result if strong measures, including military ones, are not taken by the government within a short period of time."[17] In this perspective, it makes sense to emphasize U.S. force capabilities to counter those threats that pose the greatest national risk while maintaining the capacity to adapt towards lesser threats. The most dangerous threats to U.S. national interests and armed forces are reflected in Figure 1, Balancing the Future Force to Meet National Needs; the Complexity of Risk Management.[18] This graphical depiction of the risk continuum reflects the potential impact of various threats relative to national interests and military combat power. This

perspective clearly identifies major combat operations, nuclear deterrence and Homeland Defense as interests on which the nation's security posture should be focused and military capabilities emphasized.

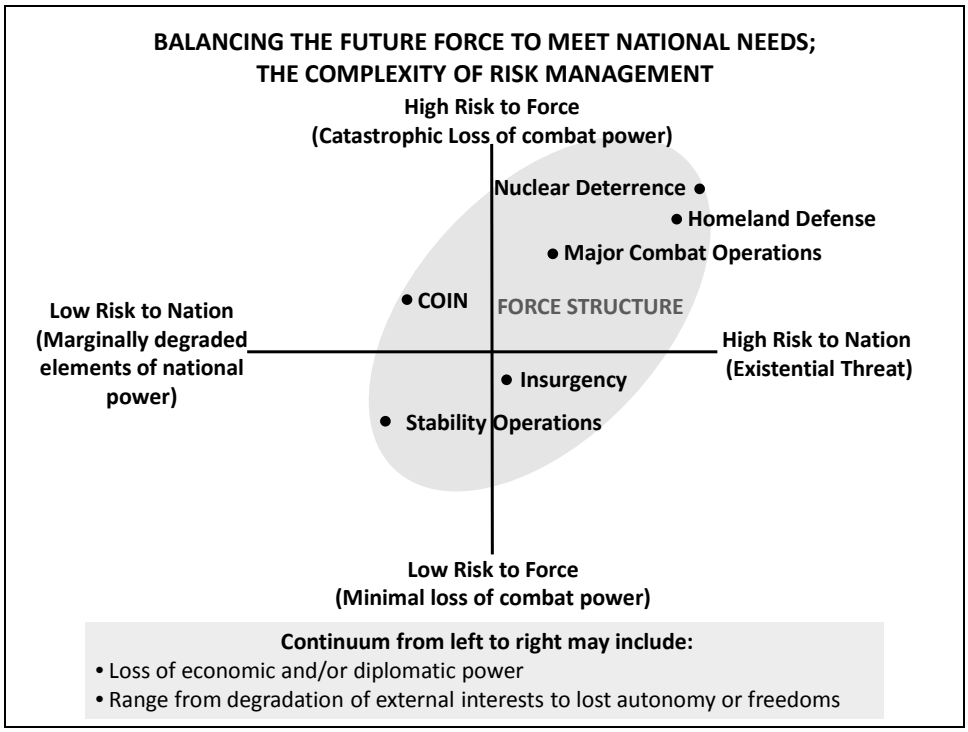

Figure 1: Balancing the Future Force to Meet National Needs; the Complexity of Risk Management

Review of the QDR, CCJO, and latest Army Capstone Concept (ACC) reflect just the opposite approach to risk. These sources of strategic guidance argue for more robust irregular and unconventional capabilities and contain potentially flawed assumptions about U.S. conventional and nuclear readiness. These documents appear to collectively distract DoD from strategic focus on a force posture firmly grounded in national interests, values, risk and economic reality.

Cited economic, domestic, and readiness challenges require that future U.S. security strategy refocus on vital U.S. interests if military strategy is to be viable and sustainable. Further, these challenges demand that future U.S. security strategy

consider and accommodate a reasonable expectation of reduced defense budgets.[19] This very likely means the SECDEF's intent for a full spectrum capability will be unaffordable as envisioned in the CCJO.[20] This also means the Army's intent for a full spectrum capability may be unaffordable as envisioned in the ACC and requires critical review.[21] The envisioned Army concept accepts that the force is not optimized for any particular threat but is postured for a broader range of missions where rapid adaptability is critical to effectiveness. This concept accepts risk across the spectrum and the key issue is how the Army might strategically balance capabilities to mitigate it.

Definition of strategic balance in a context that appropriately considers national risk and affordability is essential. The dilemma for the U.S. going forward is in determining what strategic balance means in this environment and how it might be achieved with significantly constrained resources. This requires evaluation of alternate definitions of balance and their implications. This evaluation must begin with the competing elements of balance: national values, interests, and the capacity to support them.

U.S. Values, Interests, and Resource Capacity

Our uniquely American form of democracy centers on a core set of values and expectations embodied in the Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights, and the Constitution. The national resolve to protect these freedoms has been regularly tested and reaffirmed in blood throughout our history. Because of a belief in this powerful set of values and a commitment to protect them the nation is successful in maintaining a professional, all-volunteer force. The military's demonstrated commitment to defend the nation and its interests has engendered a great bond of trust with the American people who view military leaders as professionals. As such, the population has entrusted

military leadership with a remarkable degree of confidence and professional latitude in stewardship of the nation's livelihood. The nation expects the military to deter threats to U.S. interests, to defend the homeland and economic well-being, and if the military must fight, the nation expects them to win. These expectations represent the military's core responsibilities to the nation.

The nation also has a reasonable expectation of responsible stewardship of their tax dollars employed in defense. The extent to which the military may defend the nation and support U.S policy in the future rests in the capacity of national wealth and the citizenry's tolerance for the cost of policy. National wealth has enabled U.S. to liberally exercise what the nation writ-large has accepted as a global responsibility to defend and promote democratic values abroad. There are clear indications that U.S. resource capacity to promote democratic principles abroad is now more constrained than the national reservoir of goodwill. Current conflicts have contributed to a great financial burden of debt on future generations of Americans. Going forward, formulation of security strategy requires renewed focus on balance of national values, interests, and fiscal tolerance. Focus on these factors will enable renewed emphasis on priorities and discrete qualification of interests.

It is with these considerations in mind that a discussion of NSS implications to the posture of U.S. armed forces is required. The Obama administration has not yet published a new NSS and so the 2006 Bush administration document represents current policy. The 2006 NSS represents a subtle but marked departure from past NSS documents. The document reads very similar to past NNS documents in describing U.S. intent to "…promote freedom, justice, and human dignity—working to end tyranny,

promote effective democracies…" However, the 2006 strategy goes on to describe an aggressive pursuit of a foreign policy that seeks "…to shape the world, not merely be shaped by it…"[22] "Shaping" may be interpreted many different ways but, given current nation-building efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, this language implies that the U.S. will attempt to shape the nature and character of governments.

This policy has significant implications for the nation's armed forces in terms of readiness and acceptance of risk. It requires the military to execute operations to implement a policy that is not focused on vital national interests and serves to distract focus on core obligations to the nation—to defend and deter threats. In short, the effect of this policy is increased risk to national security through erosion of military preparedness for high intensity warfare.[23] Extended focus on counter-insurgency, stabilization and nation-building operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have denied U.S. forces the ability to conduct meaningful conventional combined arms operations training.[24] Military professionals understand that effective, synchronized combined arms operations require a high level and frequency of training to sustain. The U.S. can ill afford to lose conventional dominance as an effective deterrent.[25]

High intensity combined arms training are the capabilities the nation requires most to defend against complex hybrid and conventional threats.[26] Also, the U.S. nuclear arsenal has not been modernized in over 30 years while other nuclear powers have continued to do so.[27] The dramatic erosion of U.S. military conventional training readiness and an aged nuclear deterrence represent increased national risk. Eight years of warfare has also stretched the resilience of the force which calls into question

the military's current capacity to defend against peer threats who may have aspirations that truly threaten U.S. interests.[28]

The genesis of the current military readiness predicament and the unstable global security environment may have its origin in U.S. over-reaction to the terrorist acts of 9/11. U.S. declaration of a Global War On Terror served to elevate terrorists to the same but unwarranted level of recognition as nation-states. As recent terror attempts have revealed, U.S. military efforts have not translated to reduced threat from terrorism.[29] Al Qaeda has simply moved its operations to other parts of the region and North Africa. The organization remains a growing, evolving threat that will require engagement across the globe for the foreseeable future.

Ironically, Al Qaeda is effectively employing a strategy against the West similar to the strategy the U.S. employed to win the Cold War. The U.S. succeeded in forcing the Soviet Union to spend itself into economic failure over time. Similarly, the U.S. is spending vast amounts of resources to combat Al Qaeda, who has to comparatively spend very few resources to achieve significant strategic effect. The Congressional Budget Office estimates the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to be in excess of $2.7 trillion.[30] The continuing costs of these wars will further exacerbate rapidly growing U.S. debt that President Obama has characterized as a compelling national viability issue. The national debt has security implications. In fact the Chinese hold the majority of U.S. debt and have written a strategy on leveraging economic power as a military weapon titled "Unrestricted Warfare."[31] The Chinese view of economic warfare must be considered as a serious asymmetric threat to U.S. security. U.S. economic and domestic challenges also likely mean that the DoD should expect smaller budgets.[32] In

this environment, U.S. capacity to simultaneously conduct security engagement, counter terror, repair conventional and nuclear readiness, and modernize makes achieving a balanced approach to risk a difficult challenge.

Assessing the Threat Environment and Identifying Priorities

A renewed approach to a balanced force posture should begin with a comprehensive appraisal of the security environment to identify and prioritize U.S. interests and threats to these interests. This type of assessment requires a systems approach to accommodate the great number of environmental variables to be considered. The intent is to qualify facts about the security environment in terms of what is or is not known, what is assumed, and finally, to identify what is most important to the interests of the nation. Interests must then be considered in the context of national values and relative risk. A systems approach like this is useful to effectively formulate the critical ends, ways and means of viable strategy and alternative approaches to balance.[33]

Facts

History demonstrates that U.S. nuclear, air, naval and conventional combined arms capabilities have been effective deterrents to major inter-state conflict since World War II. Also, over the last eight years, the U.S. swiftly adapted a conventionally oriented ground force into a preeminent counter-insurgency capability.

Assumptions

Despite eight years of atrophy, it remains reasonable to assume that U.S. conventional capabilities will continue to inhibit the way potential adversaries choose to fight us in the near-term.[34] Likewise, U.S. strategic nuclear, air and naval capabilities will continue to inhibit threat options for military confrontation. While other nations may

be closing the gap and are capable of technological surprise, the U.S. is paying close attention to this possibility and it also reasonable to believe that the U.S. continues to enjoy a technological advantage over potential threats.[35]

U.S. Interests

Before attempting to identify a posture to secure U.S. interests, it is necessary to discuss how interests are defined and prioritized. Noted political scientist and foreign policy expert, Donald Nuechterlein, offers a useful and appropriate approach by which to assess levels of interest. This approach categorizes interests in basic terms and then employs a transitory categorization that prioritizes interests according to the amount of value or intensity a nation gives them. Neuchterlein offers four basic categories of interests, listed in priority, are constants in measuring interest levels[36]:

- Defense of the Homeland: "Protection of the people, territory, and institutions of the United States against potential foreign dangers."
- Economic Well-being: "Promotion of U.S. international trade and investment, including protection of private interests in foreign countries."
- Favorable World Order: "Establishment of a peaceful international environment in which disputes between nations can be resolved without resort to war and in which collective security rather than unilateral action is employed."
- Promotion of Values: "Promulgation of a set of values that U.S. leaders believe to be universally good and worthy of emulating by other countries."

Neuchterlein offers a transitory scale of priority to reflect changes in the level of intensity or value associated with a basic interest category[37]:

1. Survival Interest: "... where the very existence of the nation is in peril."

2. Vital Interest: "...where probable serious harm to the security and well-being of the nation will result if strong measures, including military ones, are not taken by the government within a short period of time."

3. Major Interest: "...where potential serious harm could come to the nation if no action is taken to counter an unfavorable trend abroad."

4. Peripheral Interest: "...where little if any harm to the entire nation will result if a wait and see' policy is adopted."

Neuchterlein offers that important differentiation may be made between these transitory categories by the amount of time a nation has to reach a decision on a specific course of action, and a nation's tolerance to cost.[38] It is not surprising that the interpretation of levels of intensity associated with any interest may change from administration to administration.[39] This means that a vital national interest may become only a major interest in a new administration, or vice versa. The value of this model is it that it provides flexible framework by which to view national interest levels in perspective.

In accordance with Neuchterlein's definitions, currently known threats to U.S. interests do not meet the 'survival' definition. While peers possess nuclear and conventional capabilities that could significantly harm the U.S., peers do not appear to threaten the U.S. directly and so they are best defined as vital. Whether or not the terror threat emanating from Afghanistan or the Weapons of Mass Destruction threat in Iraq rose to the level of vital national interests is debatable. The core issue with these types of threats is in how best to address them and the immediacy of doing so. The

utility of Neuchterlein's model is that it provides a rational framework to qualify the intensity of threats. With this model in mind, the extended stabilization and nation-building efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan that followed combat operations clearly do not meet the definition of vital interests.

It is essential in the shaping security policy to revisit U.S. national interests and revalidate the transitory definitions associated with them in order to reestablish clear priorities. A future of increasingly constrained resources demands renewed emphasis on security policy focused on only the highest priority U.S. interests, namely those that meet Neuchterlein's definition of vital. Doing so enables development of viable operational concepts, identification of associated risk, and informed decisions on where along the spectrum of conflict to accept risk.

Threats that pose a significant risk to U.S. vital interests are readily apparent in some cases. China and Russia are large conventional and nuclear threats that could rapidly and dramatically threaten vital U.S. interests. North Korea is an example of a somewhat less clear threat that could meet different transitory definitions of interest. The uncertainty and complexity in identifying potential threats to U.S vital interests represents a difficult problem.

Truly vital threats may be clearly and rationally identified through consideration of threat capacity to damage the nation's interests and/or armed forces and an attributable intent that opposes U.S. interests.[40] These threats may be both hybrid and conventional in nature and include both nation state and non-state actors. In this context North Korean actions and intent clearly qualify the nation as a threat to vital U.S. interests. Consideration of the great number of potential hybrid, conventional and nuclear threats

makes a clear and logical case that the U.S. must retain superior conventional and nuclear capabilities. These continue to represent critical deterrents, and failing deterrence, decisive capabilities by which to ensure defense of national interests. The graphic depiction of these types of threats in figure 1 naturally focuses security strategy along the spectrum of conflict. The graphic provides clear insight on where to emphasize capabilities in a balanced force posture, and where the U.S. might accept risk.

Alternative Definitions of Balance

There are alternative concepts to consider in posturing U.S. forces for a future of hybrid and complex irregular threats that also continue to emphasize readiness for conventional and nuclear ones to varying degrees. Popular competing perspectives include (1) a force postured predominantly towards counterinsurgency, (2) one oriented toward Major Combat Operations, (3) a position that advocates a broad full spectrum capability, and (4) one that advocates a division of joint labor.[41] In the latter model, the U.S. would field a joint capability with each service focused on a portion of the spectrum of conflict. This model proposes that the Navy and Air Force are postured for MCO contingencies at the high end of the spectrum, while the Army and Marines emphasize their effort from the middle to low end. This course of action consciously accepts operational risk in ground force readiness to conduct high intensity combined arms operations. Doing so provides less joint capacity in conventional and MCO scenarios, and demands no Air Force or Navy adaptation to support Stability Operations.

In force posture (1), the intent to emphasize Army posture left on the spectrum towards security force assistance, counter-insurgency and stability operations assumes risk to the Army's ability to counter hybrid or conventional threats.[42] Likewise, assuming

a posture weighted towards the major combat operations may appear to ignore the hard lessons relearned in Iraq and Afghanistan on the value of irregular capabilities. It is the prospect of confronting these current types of threats with a force postured too heavily towards one end of the spectrum or the other that fuels the current debate on future doctrine.

The recently published ACC describes both the need to span the spectrum of conflict and to develop an adaptable multi-weight force capable of doing so. The ACC describes the intent to develop a balanced capability that acknowledges the need for a superior conventional capability while emphasizing the myriad of stability, irregular and hybrid challenges the force must be prepared to counter. A full spectrum capability given expected resource realities may spread the force unacceptably thin. Andrew Krepinevich of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments refers to this concept as an operationally risky "jack-of-all-trades, and clearly master-of-none."[43] This is a valid concern the Army should closely consider. Reassessment of competing priorities and resources is necessary to ensure development of a balanced concept that accommodates acceptable risk. This is a resource allocation problem that forces hard decisions in equipping, training emphasis and manning.

Prior to 2001 U.S. ground forces accepted risk at the low end of the spectrum of conflict in order to develop and maintain a dominant edge in conventional capability. Since 2001, U.S. conflicts have produced strong advocates for emphasis on unconventional capabilities. Their position anticipates that current conflicts are the most likely type in which the U.S. will engage in the future.[44] The idea of emphasizing

irregular capabilities is a highly risky proposition. The result will be further erosion of conventional dominance and increased national risk.

A Logical Approach to Strategic Balance

The search for acceptable risk and affordable balance in capabilities demands that the U.S. military sensibly leverage its current strengths. Despite expectation of a resource constrained future, there remain viable approaches to strategic balance and readiness that address threats across the spectrum of conflict. An approach that makes good sense is one that embraces, rebuilds, and maintains U.S. nuclear and conventional superiority, and recognizes what these mean to the prospect of future warfare. Australia's Brigadier General Michael Krause proposes that U.S. conventional and nuclear capabilities have "prescribed" the way in which future wars will be fought."[45] This position recognizes critical U.S. strengths that force potential adversaries to employ irregular and hybrid tactics to circumvent superior U.S. combined arms strengths. It provides a strong rationale for an Army postured towards the high end of the spectrum of conflict.

Emphasizing a posture towards the high intensity end of the spectrum of conflict has consequences. The idea of deliberately shaping future conflict to accept complex irregular and/or hybrid warfare is a rather un-nerving prospect given state or non-state aggression could materialize anywhere along the spectrum of conflict. The proliferation of increasingly cheaper lethal technologies, growing nationalism, persistent extremist ideologies, and economic haves and have-nots are a recipe for strong anti-American sentiment that portends conflict with U.S. national interests. Given the increasingly complex and dynamic threat environment, identifying potential threats is extremely difficult. Since this is the case, it follows then that the U.S. should attempt to maintain

and lever current advantages to narrow threat options and mitigate uncertainty. This approach imposes a modicum of certainty in that doing so shapes the way future threat will choose to oppose the U.S.

While adapting to irregular conflicts may be painful, it is more painful to adapt to Major Combat Operations by orders of magnitude. U.S. experience in the Kasserine Pass in 1943 demonstrates the consequences for being unprepared for a high intensity fight and potential for heavy losses in a short time.[46] In 1950 the U.S. again sent a poorly prepared Task Force Smith into Korea with similar results, having failed to remember the painful consequences of failure to maintain readiness for high intensity warfare.[47] Near-peer competitors may choose to enter into a conventional fight, should the U.S. allow further erosion of its capabilities. An unprepared U.S. force may not get a second chance to fail in a high-intensity conflict. It is a reasonable assertion that near-peer threats understand the historical implications of giving the U.S forces time to react and adapt, and will do all they can to deny the space and time to do so. This likelihood is further rationale for emphasizing a force weighted toward MCO.

In this paradigm it is logical to expect that adversaries will be forced to employ complex irregular and hybrid tactics rather than engage the U.S. in a conventional combined arms fight. The recent Hezbollah-Israeli conflict in Lebanon provides keen insights into how potential threats are likely to engage U.S. forces in the future. The mix of conventional and irregular tactics and high-tech weaponry employed by Hezbollah makes preparing for threats like them a significant challenge.[48] A force postured toward MCO possesses the force protection and combat power to counter these threats. However, a dominant conventional posture this does not diminish the

significant cross-spectrum training challenge to ensure readiness for a broad range of threats. These challenges illustrate that there are no easy solutions in posturing for the future force for cross-spectrum effectiveness. This environment is further incentive for the U.S. to be more deliberate in developing security policy and increasingly judicious about what interests a truly vital and where the nation chooses to engage in conflict.

An Approach to Getting Force Posture 'Not Too Wrong'

Noted military historian Sir Michael Howard offers that in developing security strategy, the objective is "to not get it too far wrong."[49] It is with Howard's sensible assertion in mind that viable approaches to operational concepts and force structure may be further developed. The need for a capability to conduct full spectrum operations drives the idea of a balanced force that requires a robust unconventional capability in balance with the core conventional one. BG Krause's 'prescriptive' approach to balance emphasizes a superior conventional capability while acknowledging that unconventional capabilities are critically important in the future operational environment. COIN advocates who would argue that general-purpose forces are not capable of conducting successful COIN operations ignore the fact that general-purpose forces have done so to great effect in Iraq. Readiness for COIN, stability, and other security force assistance operations is clearly a training issue that may be emphasized as required.

The Krause approach to U.S. force posture may successfully serve to narrow threat options but recognizes that threats will find a way to attack U.S. interests. As discussed earlier, recent conflicts clearly demonstrate irregular, conventional, and hybrid threats to U.S. interests, including current experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the recent Russian incursion into Georgia. Given this knowledge, a capability that postures the force too far towards either end of the spectrum accepts risk at the other.

Senior leadership agrees. Joint Forces Commander, GEN James Mattis' March 2009 statement to the House Armed Services Committee on balance indicates a clear intent for a more robust irregular Joint capability in that "…without balance, we risk being dominant but irrelevant…" His concern was that Joint forces are collectively "…superior in nuclear and conventional warfare, but poorly equipped to prevail in irregular contests."[50] GEN Mattis' statement goes on to emphasize the need to maintain conventional and nuclear superiority.[51] General Mattis also testified that "Based on current needs of the joint force, the findings of the Joint Operating Environment (JOE) 2008, and the guidance provided by the CCJO, USJFCOM will move swiftly to make irregular warfare a core competency of our military without losing conventional or nuclear superiority." Acknowledgement of the requirements is important but the hard questions on how to resource all of these capabilities are yet to be answered.

The SECDEF's vision for strategic balance also has clear implications for sister services who have a diminished role in the envisioned irregular, land-centric threat environment. While the SECDEF emphasizes that balance is the defining principle for defeating both current and future threats, the debate on what this means to Air Force and Navy roles has just begun. Like the Army, the challenge to the Joint force lies in doing what is necessary to win the current fight while simultaneously preparing for the uncertainty of future conflicts.

The Army is attempting to meet the SECDEF's challenge by developing a concept of a balanced multi-weight force. As envisioned, this formation will possess the capability to operate effectively at the Soldier-team level with the ability to quickly aggregate up to a Brigade Combat Team (BCT) force with sufficient combat power and

survivability to defeat the range of threats envisioned in the future. This concept is also built around flexible, rapidly configurable command and control capabilities that permit us to push decision-making to the Soldier level. The Army's vision of a balanced force also requires a capability to meet an implicit strategic imperative to project force--to rapidly deploy, and once deployed, meet the operational requirements of firepower, mobility and survivability of a heavy force. These are admittedly difficult requirements to achieve and there will most assuredly be capability trade-offs in light of the expected resource constraints.

Risk and the Implications of Getting Strategy "Not Too Wrong"

Despite the best efforts of the DoD to assess the threat environment and attempts to forecast the outcome of potential conflicts, analytical endeavors have largely failed to sufficiently anticipate threat responses in recent U.S. engagements in Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. These shortcomings are perceived by many as strategic and professional failures of a General Officer corps entrusted with defense of the nation.[52] Whether or not these are accurate characterizations, perceptions matter. The unanticipated nature of current conflicts serves to further exacerbate our uncertainty about predicting outcomes of warfare and highlight the implications of getting them wrong. Costly planning errors in current conflicts speak directly to the continuing challenges the U.S faces in formulating viable and affordable strategies or the future.

The perception of professional failure rightfully elicits an emotional response within a professional Army, particularly in senior leaders. Military professionals are acutely aware that the trust and support of the American people are fleeting and precious commodities. On the whole, the military continues to enjoy overwhelming domestic support. However, national support is a tenuous thread after eight years of

war and so it is critically important going forward to exercise diligence in development of future strategy. It is essential to future readiness that military strategists maintain grounded professional perspective and deliberate focus on the nature of the evolving threat environment to posture the force. In doing so, it is crucial to keep the national trust in mind with sharp focus on American values and the core security needs of the nation. This responsibility is another reminder of difficult choices on where to accept strategic risk in force posture.

Reinforcing Krause's prescriptive approach, the recent Georgia-Russia conflict is a timely reminder that, while persistent irregular and unconventional threats may be what are expected, the Army should avoid overcorrecting towards COIN, stability, and security force assistance operations, and emphasize ready and dominant hybrid and MCO capabilities.[53] The key to an effective and affordable security posture is to leverage strengths and prevent too dramatic a shift in force structure emphasis left on the spectrum of conflict.

This is a critical period in U.S. security strategy development where the nation can least afford a lack of vision or ignore the realities that near-peer conventional threats still exist, technology proliferation and economic friction persist, and where weapons of mass destruction are increasingly likely to become available to both state and non-state actors. A viable and sensible approach, given every threat cannot be predicted, is to leverage U.S. strengths to effectively narrow the scope of threat options. Doing so imposes a modicum of certainty over the way future conflict will be fought.

Summary

Despite the best efforts of the DoD, an analytical approach to warfare only achieves so much. Predicting the outcomes of future conflict remains largely elusive.

Looking back at the nation's most recent conflicts, the great volume of analytical effort done across the DoD prior to Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom was of little use beyond phase III of these operations.[54] This does not engender confidence in predicting how future conflicts will unfold. This reality reinforces the argument that in formulating strategic policy a thorough characterization and accommodation of risk is vitally important.

Expectation of an increasingly resource constrained future requires that the U.S. continue to accept strategic risk in readiness to conduct missions at the low-to-middle portion of the spectrum of conflict. This means adapting to irregular or unconventional conflicts as they are encountered. As previously asserted, adapting to irregular conflicts may be painful but history reflects that it is more painful to adapt to major combat operations. Through eight years of predominantly unconventional conflict in Iraq, the U.S. has lost just over 4, 300 killed in action.[55] By comparison, the U.S. lost over 300, 000 soldiers in just over three years in WWII, losing over 1000 soldiers in only four days in Tunisia's Kasserine Pass in 1943.[56]

Capable hybrid and conventional threats remain the most potentially catastrophic to U.S. forces. In shaping security strategy for the future it is imperative that the most potentially catastrophic threats drive force structure. Leadership must consider that threats may choose to enter into hybrid or major conflict if their resource needs drive them to confrontation and they perceive U.S. capabilities have eroded. The U.S. must expect threats to deny its forces space and time to react and adapt. The critical requirement in posturing the force for success is to adequately characterize risk to national interests and mitigate risk through leverage of strengths. Doing so will impose

some certainty into future conflict and ensure that national security strategy and the supporting military concepts are “not too far wrong.”

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